

THE PREACHER AND HIS WIFE.

The frugal meal was over, and the wife and mother was composing her children, and her still beautiful face, for the morning devotion, when a sharp ring was heard at the street door and a coarse, rough-looking man entered.

"Morning, sir," was the friendly salutation; "I come to see if you'd go to Jim Crawford's funeral—it's this afternoon."

"Where did he live, sir?" enquired the clergyman; "I think I have not known the person."

"Likely—for he never went to meeting; he lives out in the Gore; it's better than two miles. But will you come to the funeral at two o'clock?"

"Yes, I will try to be there in time," answered Mr. Morris.

"My dear," said the wife, looking anxiously at her husband, "you ought not to go so far this chilly day, with your cold, and you must not think of walking."

"I must go, Mary, and I fear I must walk, for I dare not look my bill at the lively stable in the face. But my children, we will be quiet now; and Clara, dear, you may read."

Scarcely had the last portion of the good man died away, before another ring of the door-bell startled the little flock, and a green shawl and orange scarf made their appearance, simultaneously with their owner, Miss Crump, who was a thin, sharp-visaged person, with keen black eyes which seemed always to know if a cape collar were put on the least awry; and every body knew that the thinnest fabric, or the shyest spider, never escaped her vigilance.

Mrs. Crump was accompanied by her friend Mrs. Drake who had such a severe, self-righteous expression in her face, that I always felt in her presence, in spite of my better judgment, that Mrs. Drake was sitting near a very unworthy person.

Her eyes seemed all the time to be saying, "I must and will do my duty, however painful it may be," and for that matter her lips never quivered with their neighbors.

Poor Mrs. Morris looked anxiously at the undusted chairs and tables; Miss Crump looked with her two twinkling eyes at Mrs. Morris, and at the same time seemed to be scanning every piece of furniture in the room.

Mrs. Drake looked with awful gravity at her victim for some time, and then she opened those solemn lips and said that she had called that morning on very important business. She was very sorry, but her duty, however painful, must be performed. She thought it proper that Mrs. Morris should be present, as it concerned him vitally.

Mr. Morris, who had gone to his study, was summoned to his unfinished page, to attend the vitally important matter.

Mrs. Drake looked at Miss Crump, and Miss Crump twinkled at Mrs. Drake, and that lady commenced.

"I regret extremely that I am called here on such an unpleasant errand; but you know my dear friend, that it would be wrong in me to keep silent any longer."

Miss Crump's eyes twinkled low, till they seemed like two tiny sparks of fire. Mrs. Drake's severity increased, and she proceeded:

"It is reported, Mr. and Mrs. Morris, in this village that you keep in your house a pack of cards, and that you are both in the habit of spending whole evenings with your children in playing cards."

"This practice is very different from what you preach, Mr. Morris; and the influence upon our people must be most awful."

"Mrs. Drake," said Mrs. Morris, "I am surprised that any one, knowing me, should have believed the story for one moment. Will you tell me who your informer was?"

"Why," says Mrs. Drake—looking very much "I am holier than thou"—"I am not at liberty to give names; but in the first place a young lady went into your parlor, in the evening, and she saw you all doing the same thing repeatedly."

"Have watched me?" asked Mr. Morris, "how?"

"Why, through the window, when the curtains were drawn aside."

A flash of indignation shot across Mr. Morris's face; but he was a minister, and didn't want the burning thoughts; his indignance deserved reproof.

Mrs. Morris's hitherto distressed face broke into a smile, almost sarcastic, as she walked quickly to the drawer of the shining center-table, and took from thence a bundle of cards, each one hearing a set of questions and answers.

"Here they are," said she, giving them to the ladies; "our children call them the Scripture cards; and we do often ask and answer the questions in order that we may amuse and instruct them at the same time."

Mrs. Crump gave two or three short, sharp coughs, and rose to say good morning.

Mrs. Drake, looking as if she were the most persecuted of human beings, also rose, and said she felt it to be her duty to pay some visits in Silver street before dinner.

The pastor went with a worn look to his sermon, to take up the thread of thought which had been so rudely broken; and the wife went with long sigh to the baby she had neglected for the morning call. She had scarcely soothed it into slumber, before she was summoned to the parlor to meet Miss Dutton.

The lady looked at Mrs. Morris with her little faded blue eyes, and said—holding up at the same time a large green bag, dropical with a large amount of knitting work and balls—

"Well, Mrs. Morris, I have come to spend a part of the day with you, quite in the family way: now don't put yourself out at all."

STOVE AND GRATE FOUNDRY.

resources of her larder, and fled to the kitchen to consult with her maid of all work as to dinner prospects.

"Biddy, you may get both the steak and salmon for dinner."

"But you'll be wanting the fish to-morrow, ma'am," said Biddy, startled by this unusual prolixity.

"To be continued."

LOUISVILLE, KY.

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